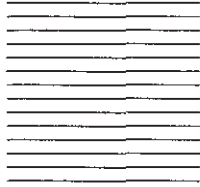


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THEORY AND PRACTICE OF GROUP COUNSELING

T H I R D E D I T I O N

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Psychodrama

Introduction

Psychodrama, created and developed by J. L. Moreno, is a primarily group-therapy approach in which the client acts out or dramatizes past, present, or anticipated life situations and roles in an attempt to gain deeper understanding, achieve catharsis, and develop behavioral skills. Significant events are enacted to help the client get in contact with unrecognized and unexpressed feelings, to provide a channel for the full expression of these feelings and attitudes, and to encourage new behavior. The methods of psychodrama are best thought of as tools for helping people relate to one another more effectively. Blatner and Blatner (1988) say that the term *drama* does not refer to theatrics; rather, it pertains to reworking our lives as if they were dramatic situations and we were the playwrights.

Psychodrama had its origins in the Theater of Spontaneity, which Moreno started in Vienna in 1921. People who participated in the Theater were not professional actors, and they didn't have any scripts. Instead, they played out in a spontaneous manner events from the daily newspaper or topics suggested by the audience. After the act people in the audience were invited to discuss the experiences they had had while observing the performance. Moreno found that the personal problems, and thus the reactions, of the audience influenced not only the choice of the topic but also the way in which the participants played their parts. He also found that both the people involved in the play and the people in the audience experienced a psychological release of pent-up feelings (catharsis). The Theater of Spontaneity led

him to develop the group methods and specialized therapeutic techniques that he later incorporated into psychodrama.

Psychodrama is designed to facilitate the expression of feelings in a spontaneous and dramatic way through the use of role playing. One of its values in group work is that it allows a maximum number of people to play various roles and receive feedback about the impact of these roles (Orcutt, 1977). The techniques of psychodrama lend themselves very well to producing lively group interaction, exploring interpersonal problems, experimenting with novel ways of approaching significant others in one's life, and reducing one's feelings of isolation. (Although psychodramatic therapy is interpersonally oriented, *intrapersonal* aspects of group members' lives are often explored.) Zerk Moreno (1983) writes that "psychodrama represents a major turning point away from the treatment of the individual in isolation and toward the treatment of the individual in groups, from treatment by verbal methods toward treatment by action methods" (p. 158).

In many ways psychodrama was the precursor of many other group approaches, including Gestalt, encounter, and some applications of behavior-therapy groups. These orientations often use techniques that were originally developed by J. L. Moreno, and many of the role-playing and action-oriented methods used in these groups are adaptations of the specialized techniques that he pioneered.

Psychodrama and its development cannot be understood apart from its founder. In many ways, this approach is an extension of Moreno's personality. His dramatic interests can be traced to what he called the healthy megalomania of his childhood play. Later, when he was about 20, children's play caught his interest as he observed it in Vienna's parks. He began telling the children stories, which they would then enact. He observed that when they had no scripts, their portrayals were highly spontaneous and creative (Blatner & Blatner, 1988).

Of all the approaches discussed in this book, psychodrama is the system most ideally suited for group work. However, its methods can be used effectively in individual counseling and in family therapy.

Key Concepts

View of Human Nature

Moreno stresses that individuals are fully responsible for their actions and for the persons they are and will be. Thus, we see in Moreno a precursor of existentialists such as Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre. Moreno rejects Freud's position that only through a lengthy process of psychoanalysis can humans become free of the irrational forces that rule them. He also rejects the medical model, which views people as psychologically sick. Instead, he sees clients as having been damaged through social acculturation (Fine, 1979). For Moreno, freedom from the bondage of irrational forces can be achieved using psychodramatic methods, with breakthroughs often occur-

ring suddenly and spontaneously. It is to be noted, however, that these breakthroughs do not necessarily free the client from the bondage of ruling unconscious forces. Working through and integration still take time.

The philosophy of psychodrama is based on the assumption that spontaneity and creativity are the central forces of human experience. On the human, social level people have the capacity and skills for encountering one another openly, honestly, and in the here and now. Psychodrama represents a holistic approach that considers people in their physical, psychological, and social roles (Fine, 1979). Moreno's approach is predicated on the assumption that humans in society are continually evolving. People who are open to their internal strengths have the capability of meeting external demands in creative ways.

Action

Moreno's action-oriented methods represent an extension of the psychoanalytic approach, which he views as passive. Moreno sees the psychoanalytic method as constricting, rather than freeing, the individual. He is convinced of the therapeutic value of acting out one's problems rather than merely talking about them. In psychodrama, members enact their conflicts by bringing either past or anticipated events into the present. They are generally encouraged to maximize all expression, action, and verbal communication rather than to reduce it. However, some clients who act out their feelings need to learn some degree of emotional control. They may be stuck in emoting and even use it as a defense. Thus, psychodrama can be used to teach people both effective expression of their feelings and effective control of them. In contrast to psychoanalysis, it emphasizes personal interaction and encounter, focus on here and now, spontaneity and creativity, full expression of feelings, and reality testing.

Although Moreno repudiates psychoanalytic therapy, his methods are grounded in psychoanalytic concepts. Psychodrama and psychoanalysis differ substantially in their techniques but not in their goals. A special characteristic of the psychodramatic method is that it is applicable to almost any theoretical framework.

Encounter and Tele

The *encounter* is defined by Greenberg (1974) as that which occurs when individuals immediately and meaningfully confront themselves or significant others on the psychodramatic stage. The encounter always occurs in the context of the here and now, regardless of whether the enactment relates to a past event or to an anticipated one. Effective classical psychodrama consists of taking a moment or a particular situation in one's life and expanding it in various dimensions. Through this process individuals have the opportunity to reexperience the event or to experience it in a novel way, and thus they gain insight into themselves and practice behavioral change.

In 1917 Moreno edited a literary journal, *Daimon*, the leading existentialist publication of that period (Treadwell & Treadwell, 1972). He also wrote a small book entitled *Invitation to Encounter*, from which he often quoted this particular passage:

A meeting of two: eye to eye, face to face.
And when you are near I will tear your eyes out
And place them instead of mine,
And you will tear my eyes out
And will place them instead of yours,
And I will look at you with your eyes
And you will look at me with mine.

Encountering is at the very core of psychodrama, for through this process people not only meet but also understand one another on a deep and significant level. By their very nature encounters entail an element of surprise, because they are not rehearsed or forced. The encounter entails dimensions of both transference and empathy, yet it goes beyond them. It fosters a sense of community in a group, which builds the trust that is necessary for productive work.

Related to encounter is the concept Moreno terms *tele*, the two-way flow of feelings between members of a psychodramatic group. *Tele* is an interpersonal exchange. Moreno calls it a "feeling of individuals into one another, the cement which holds groups together" (1964, p. xi). *Tele* accounts for a person's ability to penetrate and understand another person. Moreno considers it "therapeutic love." Through *tele* there is a strengthening of bonds, a promotion of continuity and stability, and a sense of group cohesion. *Tele* is the sum total of the feeling aspects of empathy, transference, and countertransference; it is the factor responsible for the increased interaction among participants of a group. Through it, they can find creative alternatives for working out interpersonal conflicts. In this sense, *tele* is a therapeutic factor related to change. Healing of individuals occurs through a reciprocal empathic feeling.

Spontaneity and Creativity

Moreno considers spontaneity and creativity to be characteristics of the self-realized person. He sees them as the central ingredients in both psychodrama and healthy living. From his perspective spontaneity is an adequate response to a new situation and a novel response to an old situation. The essential qualities of spontaneity include openness, a freshness of approach, a willingness to take initiative and risk, and an integration of external realities with one's internal world of thinking and feeling. Spontaneity is not to be confused with impulsivity, for it includes an intention to achieve a constructive result (Blatner & Blatner, 1988). It influences the present situation and the reporting of past situations. From this view-

point the present determines the past, rather than the past determining the present.

Most of us can be highly creative if we allow ourselves to be spontaneous. Moreno observed that children in Vienna, in contrast to adults, were able to enter into role-playing and fantasy situations without any difficulty and to freely express their feelings. As people grow older, they tend to become less and less spontaneous. To remedy this tendency, Moreno and his associates developed methods of spontaneity training aimed at freeing people from limiting scripts and rigid and stereotyped responses. They adopted techniques that encouraged the uninhibited participation of the audience, and they stressed the need to get in touch with one's fantasies and feelings by enacting situations that trigger certain emotions. Moreno assigned so much importance to spontaneity that he considered spontaneity training as the way of enabling people to take dramatic steps in the future and to meet new situations from a fresh perspective.

Although the development of spontaneity is valued in psychodramatic groups, Nicholas (1984) cautions against pushing members too quickly to allow their spontaneity to be expressed. She suggests that group members be treated gently and respectfully and that they be allowed to get involved in the group action in ways of their choosing when they feel ready to do so. She believes that the most important teaching tool for enhancing spontaneity is the leader's ability to model spontaneous behavior. For this reason she recommends that group leaders obtain their own training in psychodrama and that they experience other creative and expressive group approaches. To be able to create a climate that fosters the development of spontaneity, it is essential that leaders be aware of their own feelings and express and draw on their feelings in intuitive ways.

Dealing with the Present

Psychodrama emphasizes enacting conflicts or crisis situations in the present, as opposed to merely verbalizing about them in a detached way. A basic tenet is that everything occurs in the here and now, whether the person is dealing with an event that occurred in the past or is concerned about a future event. The theory is that reliving a scene from the past gives the participants the opportunity to examine how that event affected them at the time it occurred and a chance to deal differently with the event *now*. By replaying a past event in the present, individuals are able to assign new meaning to it. Through this process they work through unfinished business and put a new and different ending to that earlier situation. Through the enactment and the subsequent catharsis, insight often occurs.

In practical terms, psychodrama offers encouragement to members to speak in the present tense and to use action words. The placing of members in the present, regardless of when the scenes actually happened, has a tendency to reduce verbal reporting and turns members into actors (Z. T. Moreno, 1987). Elsewhere, Zerka Moreno (1983) contends that the future

has typically been neglected in therapeutic practice. When participants in psychodrama enact anticipated events as though they were taking place in the here and now, they achieve an increased awareness of their available options. In this sense psychodrama can be considered a rehearsal for life.

Catharsis

Catharsis occurs when stored-up feelings are finally expressed. In psychodrama a client experiences catharsis by verbally and physically acting out an emotion-laden situation. This release of pent-up feelings is more meaningful when participants deal with real-life situations and spontaneously express what they are feeling. Anger, sadness, hatred, rage, and despair, as well as joy and ecstasy, are tapped and released. Although catharsis is often a natural part of the psychodramatic process, it is not accurate to assume that catharsis is an end in itself. After this experience of letting go of stored-up feelings, members often gain a new perspective on an old problem and begin to feel and think differently about it. Thus, they open themselves to the possibility of behaving in new and appropriate ways in a variety of situations.

Insight

Insight, or an increased awareness of a problem situation, often follows an emotional purging. Although catharsis typically occurs during the intensity of a psychodramatic session, insight does not always follow immediately. It can occur during the enactment or at its end, when members are sharing their feelings and reactions to what happened on the stage; but it is often achieved a day or even weeks later (Greenberg, 1986). Both the participants in a psychodrama and members of the audience can experience catharsis and thus achieve insight. Once people allow themselves the freedom to release intense emotions that have in many instances been controlling them, they begin the critical process of gaining control over these feelings that they have been avoiding. This allows them to develop alternative frames of reference and see events in a new light. Members quite often then develop a dawning awareness of how they are sometimes keeping old scenes alive because they have not dealt with threatening feelings. They gradually come to an emotional and cognitive understanding that they do not have to continue living as they did in the past.

Reality Testing

The psychodramatic group provides its members with an opportunity to test reality, because it consists of real people and real-life situations. The assumptions and fantasies of an individual can be checked out for validation with other members. Also, others in the group can suggest alternatives for action, many of which the client may not have considered.

Consider the following example of how a psychodramatic group offers members ways in which to test reality. A young woman is in great emotion-

al pain over what she sees as her father's indifference to her. After concluding a psychodramatic enactment in which the young woman tells her father of her feelings of missing his love, she may still be angry with him and expect him to make the first move to change matters. During the discussion phase others in the group can point out that she is making the assumption that *he* must be the person to initiate a closer relationship. In reality, the father may well be fearful of showing her affection and attention, thinking that she is not interested in such a relationship with him. The group can be instrumental in helping her see that, if she wants to change her relationship with her father, she may have to make the initial move.

Role Playing

Role playing entails acting a part in an impromptu production. The enactment of a role does not have to be some kind of artificial performance. It can be an expression of what a person genuinely feels, fears, or would like to become. In a sense, we play multiple roles in everyday life; some of them are an extension of our unique identity, and others are stultifying and restrict our identity. Moreno's basic idea is that we have the capacity to become more conscious and creative in how we play our roles. We can examine the roles we play, renegotiate them, and choose different ways to play the ones we choose to keep. In psychodrama, members are given the freedom to try out a diversity of roles, thereby sharpening their focus on parts of themselves that they would like to present to others. Playing roles also enables participants to get in contact with aspects of themselves that they were not aware of. They can challenge stereotyped ways of responding to people and break out of behaving within a rigid pattern, creating new dimensions of themselves. Even if they fail in a new role, they know that they will have many opportunities to try again until they learn new behavioral approaches to the situations that bring them anxiety.

Role playing is a key technique, yet it should not be concluded that it is synonymous with psychodrama. It can be used by therapists of various theoretical orientations, including psychoanalysts, Adlerians, Rogerians, and eclectic therapists (Corsini, 1986). As you will see, different forms of role playing are often used in Gestalt groups, in transactional analysis, in rational-emotive therapy, and in behavioral groups. For example, in a behavioral group the focus is typically on rehearsing specific interpersonal skills. Members are likely to role-play situations such as a job interview, asking someone for a date, or dealing assertively with a pushy salesperson. Yet in a behavioral group the members work on developing and practicing concrete social skills that will help them deal effectively with a range of interpersonal situations. In psychodrama, role playing is typically characterized by a high degree of emotional intensity and often leads to a catharsis and some degree of insight. The various members of a psychodramatic group are used to portray various characters so that scenes from an individual's life can be replayed. In Gestalt groups the focus is also on getting into

contact with and expressing feelings, but the one particular member who is working assumes all the roles in a given scene and interchangeably acts out the multiple characters. In behavioral groups, as you will see later, role playing is a central procedure in helping members unlearn old and ineffective behavior patterns and acquire new and effective ways of behaving. In contrast to the psychodramatic group, however, the behavioral group is not concerned with ventilation of feelings so much as with practicing specific skills and rehearsing concrete behaviors for given situations that are problematic for members. So, although role playing is a basic part of many therapeutic approaches to group work, it is practiced in different ways with different purposes.

As it is used in psychodramatic groups, role playing can serve three primary functions, as Corsini (1966) has noted. First, it can be used as a method of *diagnosis*. As members role-play various situations, the group leader has ample opportunities to learn more about how they think and feel (as well as what they do). Role playing can also be used as a means of *instruction*. Through a modeling process members learn more effective interpersonal skills by observing a variety of ways to deal with problems. Finally, it can be used as a method of *training*, for by getting involved in the active process of playing roles, members often develop new insights and new coping skills.

Basic Components of the Psychodramatic Method

The psychodramatic method consists of the following components: a director (the person who produces a psychodrama out of the many components that make up the finished product), a protagonist (the person who is presenting a problem to be explored), the auxiliary egos (the people portraying significant others in the protagonist's life as a way of helping him or her explore an enactment), the audience (the others in the group, before whom the problem is actually explored and who typically participate in the enactment), and the stage. The stage represents an extension of the life space of the protagonist, and as such it should be large enough to allow for movement of the protagonist, the auxiliary egos, and the director. The stage area should simulate, at least symbolically, each scene that the protagonist recalls. If an actual stage is not available, a section of the room can be designated as the area where all the action will take place. Props can be placed in the action area, and when a protagonist emerges from the group, he or she moves to this area to create the psychodrama.

The Director

According to Zerkha Moreno (1987), the director's function is complicated and involves a combination of art and science. She asserts that it takes approximately 2 years to train a director. She contends that the more fully the director lives, the better he or she will be able to fulfill the functions demanded in a psychodrama.

According to J. L. Moreno (1964), the director has the role of producer, catalyst/facilitator, and observer/analyst. Directors help in the selection of the protagonist and then decide which of the special psychodramatic techniques are best suited for the exploration of the person's problem. They organize the psychodrama, play a key role in warming up the group, and pay careful attention to what emerges in the drama. Directors function as catalysts/facilitators in that they assist the protagonist in developing a scene and facilitate the free expression of feelings. At times they make therapeutic interpretations to help the protagonist gain a new understanding of a problem. Haskell (1973) describes specific functions of psychodramatic directors:

- planning the session so that various group members have an opportunity to be the protagonist and so that the problems presented are relevant to the needs and interests of the group
- providing an accepting and tolerant atmosphere that lends itself to spontaneous expressions of feelings associated with meaningful events
- warming up the group so that the participants will be psychologically ready to freely and fully explore personal issues and identify their goals
- providing support and direction for the protagonist; this includes suggesting appropriate techniques designed to enhance the enactments
- encouraging spontaneity and catharsis and helping the protagonist interpret what he or she experiences during the psychodrama
- suggesting relationships that might be explored, scenes that might be enacted, and experiments that might be tried
- stopping the action for clarification whenever necessary, and making sure that the roles are being properly enacted
- paying careful attention to the reactions of the group members and, if it seems appropriate, trying to bring other participants into the psychodrama; also, assisting other members in deriving therapeutic benefits from the experience
- protecting the protagonist from being verbally attacked by other members of the group or from being subjected to simplistic directives and advice
- leading a group discussion after the action is over—a function that entails encouraging members to give the protagonist feedback and share what they experienced during the psychodrama, what they learned from it, and what experiences and feelings they think they have in common with the protagonist
- summarizing the experience on the basis of the feedback obtained in the discussion and the enactments, thus providing a good closure for one experience and a direct lead into another area of exploration

Corsini (1966) concludes that effective directors possess both creativity and courage. Asserting that directing role playing involves not only technical skills but also creativity, Corsini makes it clear how many variables directors must attend to. They must not only depend on their own resources for being inventive but also find ways of tapping the creativity within the group. They must make decisions about what aspects of a psychodrama to focus on and quickly arrange for reenactment of certain scenes. In addition, they must be able to function as a guide by using their clinical expertise and technical knowledge to help individuals bring to the surface, explore, and work through their personal concerns. Directors must also find ways of involving as many members as possible in the protagonist's work. Effective directors are able to invent techniques that will highlight a member's struggles. They must be able to improvise, and their improvisations must have structure and meaning.

Directors must also have courage, for many of the techniques they use involve some degree of risk and of the unknown. It takes courage for directors to run the risk of being found wanting before the public eye as they work with protagonists who are exposing themselves (Greenberg, 1986). Although they are not impulsive, good psychodramatic leaders trust their clinical hunches enough to try techniques that can have a powerful effect on the members.

In addition to the characteristics of courage and creativity, qualities such as self-confidence, self-knowledge, and clinical expertise are essential. Nevertheless, group leaders who are interested in incorporating psychodrama into their style of leadership should realize that they do not have to be perfect in their first attempts to apply its methods. I have found that some beginning leaders become needlessly intimidated when they think about the personal qualities and skills needed for effectively using psychodrama. With supervised practice, experience as a member of a psychodramatic group, and specialized training, they can acquire competence in this powerful approach.

The Protagonist

The protagonist either volunteers or is selected by the group and the director. It is the protagonist who selects the event to be explored. In the case of a past event the protagonist is asked to reenact the substance of the event without attempting to recall the exact transaction or words. Spontaneity is encouraged. As soon as possible the director encourages the protagonist to move into action rather than merely talking about the event. Protagonists are asked to deal with the significant people in their past as though these symbolic figures were present. This here-and-now focus intensifies the feelings that are experienced and provides a new understanding of the relationships between protagonists and significant people in their past. In the enactment of the psychodrama the protagonist's fears and fantasies come to life and enable him or her to modify intrapsychic and interpersonal processes.

Fine (1979) describes the protagonist as the composer of an opera. It is the protagonist who writes the score and the lyrics. The director, like the conductor of the opera, follows the script and facilitates the interpretation of the drama. Others in the group who function as auxiliaries are much like musicians following scores.

The protagonist generally selects the group members who will serve as auxiliary egos. These choices are made for both conscious and unconscious reasons. Some choices are made on the basis of characteristics of group members that are similar to those of the actual significant others. When a choice is made on this basis, the interaction between the protagonist and auxiliary egos is likely to be more spontaneous, real, and effective. Directors may take exception to this rule if they want a group member to assume a role with particular therapeutic potential.

It is the protagonist's job to teach the auxiliary egos how to play their roles. This sometimes entails giving an auxiliary ego some background on the person he or she is to play and a feeling for the style of that person. Protagonists teach an auxiliary ego the behavioral style of a significant other by acting out that part.

It is important that, as protagonists act out a situation, they have the freedom to explore any aspect of the situation (and related relationships) that seems significant to them. It is the protagonists, not the director, who examine and explore, and it is crucial that their decisions be respected. Although the director may encourage protagonists to reenact a situation or deal with an anticipated event, they decide whether they are willing to follow the director's suggestions. Also, the director may employ a particular technique, but they always have the right to say that they don't want to move in that direction. Effective psychodrama requires sensitivity, on the part of both the director and the group members, to what the protagonist is ready and willing to explore. Protagonists should never be coerced or pressured; the auxiliary egos and the director are there to serve them.

At the end of a scene the protagonist or the director may suggest that the protagonist assume a different role in the same scene to determine whether he or she can respond more effectively. Another suggestion is that the protagonist fantasize about the future by acting out how things might be a year afterward, thus sharing private thoughts with the audience.

A basic Morenean concept is that the protagonist is viewed as an instrument of the group. When the protagonist is selected by the group, he or she is the person in whom the group's problems are most clearly crystallized. Psychodrama thus becomes a group process, rather than individual therapy within a group.

The Auxiliary Egos

An auxiliary ego is anyone in the group who assists the director and protagonist in the psychodramatic production. Auxiliary egos often portray the roles of significant others in the life of the protagonist. These persons may be living or dead, real or imagined. Auxiliaries may also play the roles

of inanimate objects, pets, or any emotionally charged object or being that is relevant to the protagonist's psychodrama. The auxiliary egos have other functions: (1) to play out the perceptions held by the protagonist, at least in the beginning; (2) to investigate the interaction between the protagonist and their own roles; (3) to interpret this interaction and relationship; and (4) to act as a therapeutic guide in helping the protagonist develop an improved relationship (Z. T. Moreno, 1987). Effective auxiliary egos can give a psychodrama greater power and intensity. A few ways in which they do this are by helping the protagonist warm up, by intensifying the action, and by mirroring the protagonist. They encourage the protagonist to become more deeply involved in the here and now of the drama.

Auxiliary egos use information about significant others that is conveyed to them by the protagonist through role reversal. It is the director's responsibility to assess whether their role playing is working more for the protagonist's benefit or for their own. In the latter case the auxiliaries may be redirected by the director. The director should be sure to discuss this development during the sharing phase of the group, because it usually has significant therapeutic implications for the auxiliaries. It should be underscored that psychodrama is a *group process* and that auxiliary work has great therapeutic potential. It is a good idea to permit auxiliaries some freedom of expression in their role portrayals. Playing someone else's role often serves as a vehicle for getting in touch with parts of the self not uncovered while playing one's own role. However, Zerka Moreno (1987) warns about possible dangers when there is an enmeshment between the protagonist's psychodrama and the auxiliary ego's drama. She cautions both the auxiliary ego and the director to avoid doing their own psychodrama, thus taking the focus away from the protagonist's drama. It is the director's task to make sure that the spontaneity of the total group involvement is tempered with some degree of purpose and structure so that the psychodrama does not lose its sense of focus.

The Audience

Even when people in the group are not protagonists or auxiliary egos in a psychodrama, they can still benefit in vicarious ways. They can identify with the protagonist, they can experience a release of their own feelings through their empathy, and they can gain insight into some of their own interpersonal conflicts. These other group members—the audience—provide valuable support and feedback to the protagonist. An action scene is generally followed by a discussion that involves the entire group. Other members are asked to share some experiences of their own that are related to the scene they have just observed, and they provide the protagonist with feedback concerning alternative ways of dealing with the situation. Spontaneous reactions and personal sharing are encouraged; members are typically asked to refrain from analyzing the protagonist, offering pat solutions, criticizing, and offering impersonal interpretations. Because of the

variety in group membership, the audience's reactions can help the protagonist understand the impact he or she has on others.

Phases of the Psychodramatic Process

Psychodrama consists of three phases: (1) the warm-up (or preaction) phase, (2) the action phase, and (3) the discussion, or sharing, phase. In some groups there is a "postsession rapping" process (Greenberg, 1986, p. 396), although this fourth phase is not essential in psychodrama.

The Warm-Up Phase

J. L. Moreno emphasizes the necessity of a warm-up period designed to get the participants ready for the experience. Such readiness involves being motivated enough to formulate one's goals and feeling secure enough to trust the others in the group. There are many ways to conduct a productive warm-up phase. For example:

- The director gives a brief talk about the nature and purpose of psychodrama, and participants are invited to ask questions.
- Each member is briefly interviewed by the director. A lead question may be "Is there a present or past relationship that you'd like to understand better?" If each person in the group responds to this question, a basis for group cohesion is being established.
- Members can form several sets of dyads and spend a few minutes sharing a conflict that they are experiencing and that they'd like to explore in the session.
- The "going around" technique can facilitate group interaction. Each member is asked to make some brief comments about what he or she is experiencing in the moment. This making the rounds can also focus the members on some aspect of personal work that they would like to do during this particular session.
- In a long-term group with functional people, a nondirective warm-up is often used as a way to get members ready for a session. Members may be simply asked to briefly state what they were aware of as they were coming to the session or to make any comments about their readiness to work.

In addition to structured techniques aimed at warming up a group for action, there are unstructured warm-ups, including the process by which a protagonist emerges from the spontaneous interaction at the beginning of a group session. It is critical that the leader pay close attention to verbal and nonverbal cues as the protagonist describes the issue to be explored. For example, a member may describe himself as reserved and distant from others. He may use some metaphoric or symbolic language that has rich implications. In talking about letting others get close to him, he may allude to "shields" that he has carefully built to protect himself from the pain of

rejection. Early in the course of a psychodrama, the director guides the protagonist in establishing the scene in which some significant event took place. In doing this, the leader can draw upon important cues the protagonist gave in presenting his situation, including facial expressions, figures of speech, and body posture. The process of warming up occurs as the protagonist is establishing the scene.

Whatever techniques are used in this getting-acquainted process, it is essential that members know that they will not be coerced to work on issues they choose not to explore. During the warm-up phase, members need to be reassured that the working environment is a safe one, that they are the ones to decide *what* they will reveal and *when* they will reveal it, and that they can stop whenever they want to. If participants have the impression that they will be pressured to "perform" and badgered to go further than they feel ready or willing to, the morale of the group will suffer, and the members will resist participation. The techniques are less important than the spirit and purpose of the warm-up: anything that facilitates the cohesion of the group and the establishing of trust is a useful tool for this phase.

According to Blatner (1973), the most important issue in the warm-up phase is creating an atmosphere that fosters *spontaneity*. In his view the necessary conditions for spontaneous behavior to occur include

- a sense of trust and a climate of psychological safety
- group norms that allow for the expression of emotions and for the inclusion of intuitive dimensions
- an element of playfulness
- a willingness to explore and engage in novel behavior

Blatner emphasizes the importance of the director's own warm-up as a key factor in creating a climate that encourages spontaneous behavior on the part of the group. It is during the warm-up period that directors are developing their own spontaneity. By communicating a sense of authenticity and warmth, they foster a sense of confidence and trust in the group. Similarly, modeling risk taking, self-disclosure, humor, spontaneity, creativity, empathy, and the acceptability of expressing emotions and acting them out contributes to the group's cohesion. A theme may begin to emerge, and a protagonist may be selected and move onto the stage for action.

The Action Phase

The action phase includes the acting out and working through of a past or present situation or of an anticipated event. The enactment begins when the protagonist enters the stage area. It is important to facilitate the process so that the protagonist can move into action as soon as possible. The director can assist the protagonist in getting a clear focus on a particular concern. Rather than having the protagonist tell lengthy details and risk losing the energy of the psychodrama, the director can ask the protagonist questions such as "Who in your life are you having the most trouble with at this

time?" "What few words or phrases would best describe your father [mother]?" "What is the main message that you get from your mother [father]?" "When do you feel most criticized by your wife?" "What are the things your husband tells you that upset you the most?" "What are a few lines you'd like to say to your son?" "What would you most like to hear from your daughter?" The point of these questions is to avoid lengthy commentaries on content and instead to focus the protagonist on the process of his or her struggle.

Once the protagonist has a clear sense of what he or she would like to explore, it is possible to create the scene and coach the auxiliary egos. After this focusing process, protagonists act out their problems and relationships on the stage. A single action phase may consist of one to several scenes. Scenes are constructed and enacted as they relate to the protagonist's issues. They may be interpersonal or intrapersonal in nature and usually progress from peripheral issues (presenting problems) to more central issues (the real or deeper problems). The duration of the action phase varies, depending on the director's evaluation of the protagonist's involvement and on the level of involvement of the group.

Fine (1979) observes that sometimes an entire session may be devoted to the group as a whole working through interpersonal issues among members or identifying and modifying norms that have been developing in the group. At other times a common theme such as loneliness, fear of intimacy, and feelings of rejection seems to touch everyone in the group. With skillful facilitation by the group leader each person can become involved with others in here-and-now encounters.

Haskell (1973) offers some guidelines for directors during the action phase of psychodrama:

- The protagonist should be encouraged as soon as possible to enact scenes involving conflicts in relationships.
- All the action should be geared to the here and now. Thus, if a person is dealing with a past situation and says "Then I told him," the director intervenes and says "You are telling him *now*."
- The protagonist needs the freedom to select the event, time, place, and people involved in the situation.
- Generally it is wise to deal first with less significant events and leave the reenacting of more traumatic experiences for later on.
- Protagonists should be asked to reconstruct a situation as faithfully as possible without, however, being overly concerned with recalling the exact words exchanged, so that the flow of action is not inhibited. Instead, they need to know that the essence of an interaction, as *they recall it*, is what's important.
- Protagonists should be encouraged to express themselves as fully as possible, both verbally and nonverbally. However, the director needs to exert caution so that rage is expressed symbolically—for example, by hitting a pillow—and people are not injured.

- Protagonists can be given the opportunity to play the role of each person in their scene (role reversal); this can help them develop an understanding of how others perceived and felt about an event.

The Sharing and Discussion Phase

In the third phase of psychodrama the members share and discuss the action. (For some therapists who use psychodrama, sharing and discussion are separate.) Sharing comes first, consisting of nonjudgmental statements about oneself; the discussion of the group process follows this personal sharing. The participants are asked to share with the protagonist their observations of and reactions to the psychodrama in a constructive and supportive way. The director's task is to initiate and lead a discussion that includes as many participants as possible, so that feedback can be maximized. The director needs to watch for attempts by members to analyze the protagonist or confront the person harshly at a time when, having just revealed intimate life experiences, he or she can be most vulnerable. It is important that protagonists be given an opportunity for some form of closure of their experience. If they have opened themselves up and expressed deep feelings, they need to be able to count on the support of the group in order to integrate psychologically what they have just experienced. If no such opportunity is available through sharing and exploring the meaning of the experience, protagonists may leave the session feeling rejected and lost instead of feeling freer and more purposeful.

It is crucial that the sharing from the audience be personal and nonjudgmental rather than analytical or interpretive. The director must reinforce the kind of sharing that entails self-disclosure, support, and emotional involvement on the part of the members. When members discuss how they were affected by the session, they are fostering their own involvement, transparency, and growth. This is not a time for giving advice to the protagonist or, worse yet, attempting to "cure" the protagonist by providing insightful interpretations into his or her psychodynamics. If participants attempt to analyze or to provide solutions, the director needs to intervene—for example, by asking questions such as these:

- "How has Jane's experience affected you?"
- "What feelings were stirred up in you as you were participating in Jane's drama?"
- "What experiences in your life relate to Jane's situation?"
- "Are there any feelings you had toward Jane that you'd like to share with her?"

Zerka Moreno (1987) has some excellent guidelines for making the sharing session a therapeutic experience:

- Group members should speak for themselves and not analyze the protagonist.

- Since the protagonist has engaged in open sharing, he or she deserves more than a cold analysis or critique.
- Sharing has healing effects. Healing comes from the disclosure of others' experiences.
- Insight by itself rarely has a healing impact.
- Interpretation and evaluation come later, when the protagonist is not so vulnerable.

During the sharing time, group cohesion typically increases, for members are able to see commonalities. The participation in universal struggles is a way to bond members. Thus, after an effective sharing of experiences, protagonists are not left feeling as though they are alone in an unfriendly universe. They have a basis for feeling accepted, and the personal feedback from other members acts as a reinforcement for them to continue revealing personal concerns.

Closure is an option and depends on the client, the situation, and the group. If the group will not meet again, closure is essential. If the group meets on a regular basis, however, there are times when the leader may defer closure to a later session. A period of discussion can be useful for "winding down" the emotional pitch to a more cognitive level and for helping the protagonist and the audience integrate key aspects of the session. Although the emotional aspects of an enactment are of great therapeutic value, a degree of cognitive integration will maximize the utility of these emotional components. Protagonists can be asked to express what they have learned and the insights they have acquired. It is also a good practice to encourage them to talk about the personal meaning of reliving a situation. They can be stimulated to think of how to cope with their repressed feelings and of how to deal more effectively with similar problem situations in the future.

One useful way to facilitate closure is to arrange for behavioral practice. This allows the protagonist to transfer in-group learning to everyday life. After experimentation with a variety of new behaviors, the person can use some of them with significant others outside the group and cope with situations more effectively. To facilitate behavioral practice, the protagonist presents the situation as it was originally presented in the action phase. Various techniques, such as role reversal, future projection, mirroring, and feedback, are often used to help the protagonist get a clearer idea of the impact of his or her new behavior. (These techniques are described later in the chapter.)

A word of caution concerning closure is in order. Several writers (Blatner, 1973; Goldman & Morrison, 1984; Greenberg, 1986; Leveton, 1977; Z. T. Moreno, 1987) discuss the importance of dealing with unfinished business during the final phase of a psychodrama. Before closing a session, the director may ask members to verbalize any unspoken feelings that have developed. Although it is not always necessary to work things out, it is

important that the existence of such unfinished business be mentioned before the session closes. Realistically, although some problems will be opened up and fruitfully explored, the protagonist may be far from having resolved the issue. After a successful sharing session, new work is likely to be shaping up as other members of the group identify with what they have just experienced. Of course, it is not wise to undertake new work in a given session if there is not ample time to address the issue adequately.

Protagonists can gain a good deal of insight and take some significant steps in coping with difficult personal conflicts and yet still not finish with their business. Further exploration and work are generally necessary, and members need to be warned of the danger of attempting premature and forced closure of an issue.

Leveton (1977) points out that some practitioners expect perfection. Unless everything is settled, these leaders feel that they have failed. In order to avoid such feelings, they may try to force closure in situations in which participants are better off continuing to think about what has occurred. One of the most challenging tasks for any director is learning to bring closure to a session without keeping members from further self-exploration, which is necessary for an in-depth resolution of their problems.

An optional part of psychodrama is the "postsession rapping" period, which provides opportunities for some social sharing among the participants. Greenberg (1986) typically invites those who attend a psychodrama to stay for a while and have coffee or tea. This is a time when participants can talk with one another in more informal ways and can say something to another person that they did not have a chance to say during the session. This period also provides further opportunities for people to wind down from an experience.

Techniques of Psychodrama

Psychodrama uses a number of specific techniques to intensify feelings, lead to catharsis, and bring about increased self-understanding. Such understanding is achieved by working through and integrating material that has surfaced in a psychodrama. These techniques, while instrumental to the success of the psychodramatic process, are not ends in themselves but means to the spontaneous expression of feelings by the participants. Thus, J. L. Moreno (1978) warns against the misuse of techniques simply to stir up a dramatic performance.

Directors have the latitude to invent their own techniques or modify standard ones. Because psychodrama can be very powerful, practitioners need to bring caution and commitment to the practice of their technical skills, and they need to know when and how to apply these methods. Effective psychodrama consists of far more than the mere use of certain techniques. Practitioners must learn to know, and work with, the members' psychological world in an educated, trained, sensitive, caring, and creative manner.

I suggest that you keep these cautions in mind as you read the following overview of some standard psychodramatic techniques. These techniques are described in detail in the following sources: Blatner (1973, 1989), Blatner and Blatner (1988), Leveton (1977), J. L. Moreno (1958, 1964), Zerka Moreno (1959, 1965, 1983, 1987), Greenberg (1986), Goldman and Morrison (1984), and Starr (1977).

Blatner and Blatner (1988) present some useful guidelines for selecting appropriate techniques to explore a particular theme:

- Whenever possible, use physical action rather than talking about a situation.
- Use direct address, talking to the people most involved (or auxiliaries playing their roles) rather than about them.
- Look for ways to promote the active behavior of other members by involving them in an enactment.
- Make abstract situations more concrete by working with specific scenes.
- Encourage participants to make affirmative statements about themselves by using sentences beginning with "I."
- Continue to encourage members to deal with situations in the past or future as if they were happening in the present moment.
- Recognize and tap the potential for redactions, renegotiations, and corrective experiences in the present.
- Pay attention to the nonverbal aspects of communication.
- Have participants directly exercise empathic skills through role reversal.
- Include a degree of playfulness, humor, and spontaneity in a situation.
- Utilize symbols and metaphors, personifying them and making them more vivid.
- Include other artistic principles and vehicles, such as movement, staging, props, poetry, art, and music.
- Exaggerate or amplify behavior to explore a wider range of responses.
- Use the warm-up process as a precursor to creative behavior.

Self-Presentation

The protagonist gives a self-portrayal in order to introduce the actor. Let's assume that Jack, the protagonist, wants to explore his relationship with his daughter, Laura. He may do so by demonstrating how he typically approaches her. His self-presentation gives the audience a sense of how he experiences himself in the father/daughter relationship. In the course of the self-presentation he may state the problem as he sees it and may say something about his daughter.

Role Reversal

One form of role reversal consists of the "presentation of the other." In addition to presenting himself or herself, a protagonist may present another

significant person (such as mother, father, sibling, lover, close friend, teacher, or relative). The protagonist presents a completely subjective perspective of this significant person by demonstrating how he or she behaves. In this way the protagonist is giving cues to the auxiliary ego so that the scene can be played in a way that is relatively close to the protagonist's experience. Role reversal is indicated when it is appropriate for the protagonist to empathize with the viewpoint of another person. It is also useful during the warm-up phase and in the casting of the scene (Blatner & Blatner, 1988).

Zerka Moreno (1983) makes the point that protagonists must act out the truth as they feel it and from their own subjective stance, regardless of how distorted their presentation may appear to the other members or the leader. For example, Jack, the protagonist, presents his daughter. Preferably, he plays the role of Laura and demonstrates how she typically responds. As a variation, the director can interview Jack as he plays the role of his daughter. This technique will give the director and the group a clearer picture of how Jack perceives Laura and how he thinks she perceives him.

Through role reversal, protagonists are encouraged to empathize with a significant person in their lives. Since they must assume the role of that person within the psychodramatic setting, they begin to develop a deeper appreciation for the world of that person. The auxiliary is instructed to keep the drama true to the protagonist's perception of events. The leader needs to intervene to reduce the chances that the auxiliary will contaminate the process with his or her own dynamics.

Typically, the director suggests a role reversal when it appears that the protagonist would benefit by attempting to "walk in the shoes" of the person with whom he or she is experiencing conflict. In the case of Jack, he can "become" his daughter while another member assumes his role as a father. By playing the role of Laura as he experiences her, Jack may begin to come to a clearer understanding of how *she* feels.

Role reversal is considered to be one of the most powerful tools of psychodrama, and it serves many purposes (Fine, 1979):

- It allows a perceptual shift so that the protagonist can see the situation in a fresh way.
- It gives the protagonist a chance to experience the world from the point of view of the other.
- It allows expansion of the client's awareness and behavior.
- It encourages participants to take responsibility for their behavior and decisions.
- It helps protagonists confront the impact of their immediate interpersonal behavior.

Writing that role reversal is at the heart of role-playing theory as demonstrated in psychodramatic groups, Zerka Moreno (1983) maintains that this technique encourages maximum expression in conflict situations. Protagonists' distortions of these relationships can be brought to the sur-

face, explored, and corrected in action. By reversing roles, protagonists can reintegrate, redigest, and grow beyond situations that are keeping them unfree. Role reversal allows members to fully express their perceptions of reality, to get feedback from others in the group about their subjective views, and to make modifications of their perceptions to the extent that they discover distortions. It can be used throughout the drama to correct or modify the principal auxiliary's role portrayal and to present additional information to the auxiliary. More importantly, it is used throughout the action phase to increase the protagonist's depth of perception of the significant other.

Soliloquy

At times, protagonists are asked to imagine themselves in a place alone where they can daydream out loud (soliloquize). The director may ask a protagonist to stop the action at some point, turn aside, and express her feelings at the moment. Or the director, on sensing ambivalence on the part of another protagonist, may stop the action and ask him to walk around the stage and say what he is thinking and feeling. The protagonist may be engaged in a solitary activity, such as walking home. As a variation, the protagonist may soliloquize with a double as the two walk together. The double can facilitate the protagonist's expression of feelings and thoughts that would typically be kept hidden.

The soliloquy is valuable in helping protagonists clarify their thinking and experience their feelings more intensely (Greenberg, 1986). This technique facilitates an open expression of what they may be thinking and feeling but not verbally expressing. For example, Jack may be asked to verbalize his thoughts during the course of a role reversal. This soliloquy gives him the chance to get a sense of what he believes Laura is thinking and feeling but perhaps not expressing directly. He can also be asked to soliloquize after he has portrayed himself. He does this by summarizing his uncensored thoughts, expressing his feelings, and examining them more closely.

Double Technique

An auxiliary ego stands behind the protagonist and acts with or even speaks for him or her. The double can mirror the inner thoughts and feelings of the protagonist, often expressing unconscious material. Doubling facilitates the client's awareness of internal processes and often leads to an expression of unvoiced thoughts and feelings. The double supports the protagonist and also serves as a link between the director and the protagonist. The double may serve an integrative function and also intensify the interaction between the protagonist and the auxiliary ego. It is useful for doubles to assume both the posture and the attitude of protagonists. However, these are merely tools that doubles use to help them fulfill their purpose. This purpose is to help protagonists increase their awareness of inner conflicts and repressed feelings and even express them. According to Leon Fine

(personal communication, June 1988), the double is the agent of the protagonist. The double attends to process events and the immediate moment and is available to the protagonist in role reversals and in other roles. In Jack's case, the double technique might be used if he felt stuck or felt overwhelmed by his daughter. The double would then help Jack stay in contact with and express his feelings. Effective doubling often results in the escalation of an interaction, and it is likely to provide the protagonist with the needed catalyst to say things that until now have remained unexpressed.

Multiple doubles may be used to represent and embody the various sides of the protagonist. They can represent the protagonist's internal conflicts, desires, assets, liabilities, or various roles he or she plays in life (Goldman & Morrison, 1984). With Jack, one double may represent the side of him that misses his daughter and wants to express love, and the other double can be the "cold father," who really wants to have nothing to do with her. The doubles may speak at the same time, or they may take turns. If the doubles are effective, the father's ambivalent feelings toward his daughter can be successfully portrayed on the stage, and Jack may come to see which side within him is stronger. Also, he may get a clearer picture of the feelings and attitudes he'd like to express to Laura.

Mirror Technique

An auxiliary ego assumes the role of the protagonist by mirroring the protagonist's postures, gestures, and words as they appeared in the enactment. During the auxiliary ego's mirroring, the protagonist is not on the stage, so that by observing his own behavior reflected by another person, he can see himself as others do. The protagonist stands back and watches a very live form of videotape playback. This process may help the protagonist develop a more accurate and objective self-assessment. Mirroring is basically a feedback process, because the technique sensitizes protagonists to the reality of how others perceive them. This feedback may help clarify any discrepancies between their self-perception and what they communicate of themselves to others (Goldman & Morrison, 1984). Consider the illustration of Jack. If he is mirrored as demanding, critical, aloof, and cold, he is likely to wonder whether that's the way his daughter perceives him. This technique may be particularly useful if others in the group see Jack differently from the way he sees himself or if he has difficulty presenting himself verbally or in action. Blatner and Blatner (1988) caution that mirroring can be a powerful confrontation technique and must be used with discretion. It must be given in the spirit of concern and empathy, rather than making the protagonist the object of ridicule.

The Magic Shop

The "magic shop" is often used as a warm-up technique and may also be elaborated on throughout the action phase. This technique is frequently used with protagonists who are unclear about what they value, who are

confused about their goals, or who have difficulty assigning priorities to their values. One at a time, the group members bargain with the "storekeeper," who has the power to grant each member his or her most pressing wish. An auxiliary ego or the director is the storekeeper in a magic shop filled with imaginary qualities. These qualities are not for sale, but they can be bartered for. Thus, clients exchange qualities they possess for qualities they desire. Jack, for example, may want to exchange his competitive style for the ability to open up to his daughter in a loving way. This technique can help him assess his priorities and see what is keeping him from getting what he wants from his relationship with Laura.

Future Projection

The technique of future projection is designed to help group members express and clarify concerns that they have about the future. These concerns are not merely discussed and talked about; rather, the anticipated event is brought into the present moment and acted out. These concerns could include wishes and hopes, dreaded fears of tomorrow, or goals that provide some direction to life. Members create a future time and place with selected people, bring a future event into the present, and get a new perspective on a problem situation. A member who has anxiety over an upcoming interview, for example, is asked to act out a future scene so that she can deal with her fears. Not only can she come into contact with her feelings, but she can also gain insight into behaviors that are likely to impede an effective interview. She can get feedback on the way she presents herself in the interview, and she can practice various behavioral styles to prepare herself psychologically for what she sees as a stressful experience. She may act out either a version of the way she hopes the interview will ideally proceed or her version of the most horrible outcome.

Once members clarify their hopes for a particular outcome, they are in a better position to take specific steps to achieve the future they desire. To return to the case of Jack, he can be asked to carry on the kind of dialogue with Laura that he would ideally like to have a year later. He may even reverse roles and "become" his daughter, saying all those things that he hopes she would say to him. He can also project himself forward and tell her how he has acted differently toward her during the last year. If he gets a clearer sense of the kind of relationship that he would like with her and if he accepts his own responsibility for the quality of this relationship, he can then begin to modify some of the ways in which he approaches his daughter.

Role and Functions of the Director

We have already observed many of the functions that the director of a psychodramatic group must perform. There are other, more general comments that need to be made with regard to these functions. Since psychodrama is a powerful method, it is essential that directors have theoretical, technical, and practical knowledge of its techniques. Beyond simply

knowing the techniques, they must have a grasp of the philosophy and theory underlying these techniques. In order to fully appreciate the potential values and risks inherent in these techniques, they need to have experienced them as participants. Inept leadership—manifested, for instance, in forcing people into situations with which they are not ready to deal—can have serious negative consequences for the participants.

Although there is definite value in using members as auxiliary egos, for example, there is also the ever-present risk that they will bring their own distortions to the roles they play, further complicating the protagonist's life. The same situation occurs when members project their own conflicts onto the protagonist and offer quick interpretations and solutions to thorny issues. Another key problem that requires skillful handling by the director is adequate debriefing, so that participants will not be left hanging with unproductive unfinished business. For all these reasons, the sensitivity and expertise of the director are crucial if psychodrama is to be therapeutic.

Evaluation of Psychodrama

Value of Psychodramatic Techniques

I value psychodrama's action-oriented methods and role playing mainly because they lead the participants to the direct experience of real conflicts. I have little patience with endless talk about problems, since it has been my experience that members profit very little from talking about themselves in a detached, storytelling manner. But for the participants to learn about themselves, role playing must be designed to fit a specific situation, and certain role-playing techniques must be used to provide further understanding of actual conflicts in the members' lives. If a psychodrama is set up just to give the members an idea of what it's like, I question the outcomes.

I tend to employ psychodramatic methods when a member is undergoing a conflict situation that can be enacted or dramatized in some form. I see these methods as useful not only for the person who is the focus of the action but for other participants as well. Most of my uses of psychodrama have led to increased participation by other members. This method also binds people together, because it offers opportunities for them to become aware that their own struggles are also the struggles of others.

People often simply don't see other ways of behaving with the significant people in their lives. In psychodrama other group members can demonstrate alternative ways of responding and thus provide the person with different frames of reference. In a role-playing situation, for example, Noreen approaches her husband, Roger, with a litany of all his shortcomings: he's selfish, he doesn't care, and he doesn't show his feelings or truly share his life with her. Another member can show Noreen a different way of relating to Roger that is not accusatory and that won't cause him to close up and ignore her complaints. As a result, she may want to try new approaches, which she may not even have considered before.

Integration of Emotional Work with a Cognitive Perspective

It is not necessary for a group practitioner who wants to develop a psychodrama workshop to adhere to the action-oriented methods that have been described in this chapter. These methods can be integrated into the framework of other group approaches. Despite the value of psychodrama, I have found that some of the workshops I attend as a participant are needlessly restrictive. These techniques are often quite useful and appropriate, yet I am not in favor of converting every interaction into dramatic form. Integrated into other systems, such as some of the cognitive styles of behavior therapy, psychodrama can provide the exploration of emotions that these other systems often play down. The psychodramatic group can be enhanced by more emphasis on the cognitive aspects of the process and by deeper investigation of the meaning of the cathartic experience.

Although there is value in catharsis, my experience with groups has taught me time and again how essential it is to provide a context in which members can come to an understanding of what their bottled-up emotions have done to them, to others, and to their relationships. Yet emotional release and self-understanding alone do not seem sufficient to produce lasting changes in one's way of thinking/feeling/behaving. I am convinced that such deep changes will come about only if members are taught how to transfer what they have learned in their sessions to everyday situations. It is also critical to teach them ways of maintaining these positive emotional and behavioral changes. This can be done by helping them plan ways of coping effectively when they meet with frustration in the world and when they regress by seeming to forget the lessons they have learned. An excellent time for this cognitive work and formulation of action plans is toward the end of the sharing sessions after each psychodrama has been brought to a close. This cognitive work might come after other members and the protagonists have had opportunities to express what they were feeling during the psychodrama. One excellent way to help members achieve closure on some of their emotional issues is to have them begin to think about the meaning of heightened emotional states. They can be encouraged to formulate their own interpretations of their problem situations. Furthermore, they can reflect on how their beliefs and decisions may be contributing to some of the emotional turmoil that they reexperienced in a psychodrama.

Simply encouraging people to "get in touch with their feelings" does not seem potent enough to goad them into *doing* something different when they meet with future difficulties. Thus, rehearsals for future encounters, coupled with constructive and specific feedback, can be of real value to those members who want to develop alternative means of relating to significant people in their lives.

According to Blatner and Blatner (1988), a major contribution of psychodrama is that it supports the growing trend toward eclecticism in psychotherapy. As we have seen, the experiential aspects of psychodrama blend

well with cognitive approaches. Many of the psychodramatic techniques can also be adapted to work well within the framework of other contemporary theoretical models, including psychoanalytic therapy and object-relations theory, behavior therapies, multimodal therapy, Gestalt therapy, Adlerian therapy, play therapy, imagination therapy, Jungian therapy, family therapy, and group therapy. (See Blatner and Blatner for a more detailed discussion of integrations with other therapies.)

Ethical Issues in Employing Psychodramatic Techniques

Blatner (1973) emphasizes that psychodrama is not a panacea. He cautions practitioners against the danger of romanticizing a single approach, thus becoming blind to the limits of that approach and to the values of other methods. He encourages his readers to obtain some supervised training in the use of psychodrama before attempting to apply any but its most basic techniques. Recognizing that psychodrama is a powerful form of intervention, he underscores the importance of the practitioner's knowledge and ability to deal therapeutically with what surfaces. Elsewhere, Blatner and Blatner (1988) stress that although the application of psychodramatic methods appears relatively easy, the process of coordinating these methods in an intensive psychodrama requires extensive training. They underscore that sound clinical judgment is needed, along with follow-up procedures. They maintain that psychodrama requires a working through and integration of the insights that flow from an enactment. The clinician's judgment remains the crucial factor, and the methods cannot be used in untrained hands either effectively or therapeutically.

Leveton (1977) warns about the irresponsible use of psychodramatic procedures. Skilled directors, she says, are willing to devote the time necessary to develop their skills, and they have undergone a training program under the supervision of an experienced clinician. She describes some of the "new students" she has encountered, whose "cups may run over with techniques" and who have no fear of using these techniques, no matter what the circumstances.

In agreement with the Blatners and Leveton are J. L. Moreno and Elefthery (1982), who remind us that psychodrama is a potent method and that the potential for harming clients is great when it is practiced by untrained persons. They emphasize how essential it is for leaders to have a thorough knowledge of group dynamics and to know their own limitations as well as the limitations of the method for certain client populations. They write that psychodrama should be used only very carefully, if at all, with acting-out individuals, with a seriously disturbed population, or with a sociopathic population. It is especially important that leaders have the experience and knowledge to deal with underlying psychopathology. In addition, they must have considerable sensitivity so that they do not push disturbed clients past a point that is therapeutic. It is also critical that they

exercise good judgment in structuring situations so that members are not likely to open up old wounds without getting some closure to them. In addition to training and supervision in psychodramatic methods, a leader who wants to practice this approach should have considerable experience as a protagonist. If leaders have experienced techniques personally, they have a much better framework for knowing when particular methods are called for and for anticipating their effects.

Both Blatner (1973) and Moreno and Elefthery (1982) discuss the danger of leaders' being attracted to psychodrama to fill their egotistical needs. It is critical that they be aware of how their own personal problems and needs might interfere with their functioning. In this regard, countertransference issues must be worked through before the leader can hope to have a therapeutic impact on the group. If group leaders are not secure in their professional competence, they may easily become impatient with what they perceive as the "slow progress" of clients. Out of their desire to speed up the gains of their clients and to see more immediate results, they may resort to a variety of manipulations designed to stir up emotions for the sake of drama.

Although spontaneity is one of the basic concepts of psychodrama, it can be misused. It is imperative that a group leader's spontaneity, inventiveness, and courage to try new techniques be tempered with a measure of caution, respect for the members, and concern for their welfare. Goldman and Morrison (1984) caution therapists to be aware of both the ease with which individuals can be opened up and the necessity of assisting them to achieve closure. They also suggest that therapists need to have a clear purpose in using specific techniques. The general rule they recommend is "When in doubt, err on the side of caution" (p. 102).

In addition to having been a protagonist in a group many times, directors should have experienced personal psychotherapy. Psychodrama can be a very directive technique and thus tends itself to abuse through countertransference. The dangers of this abuse can be greatly lessened, if not avoided, with the personal awareness gleaned from individual therapy.

Applying Psychodrama in Multicultural Settings

If practitioners take seriously the cautions that have been mentioned in this chapter, psychodrama can make unique contributions in helping ethnically and culturally diverse populations. Rather than having a mother merely talk about her problems in relating to her children, for example, she can take on the role of some of her children during therapeutic sessions. Of course, it is important not to suggest directive techniques that are likely to open up intense emotional experiencing too quickly, for some members will be frightened of these feelings and may withdraw from the group. Rather than pushing members to emote, leaders can look for clues to when an invitation to move into some kind of action or role-playing situation would be most appropriate.

For people who have English as a second language, psychodrama has some interesting applications. My colleagues and I have often asked group members to speak to a significant other in their native language as they are engaged in a role-playing situation (Corey, Corey, Callanan, & Russell, 1988). When they speak in their native language, their emotions quickly come to the surface. I recall a German-born group member who was symbolically speaking in English to her father in a role-playing situation. She did this in a detached manner, and what she said had a rehearsed quality to it. We asked her to continue talking to her father, but to speak in German. She did so and was quickly overcome with emotion. It was difficult for her to keep up her defenses against experiencing her intense feelings when she used her native language. It was not important for the leaders or the other members to understand the exact words spoken. The content was not so important as the process in this case. Even though others in the room may not have understood the verbal exchanges in the psychodrama, they did understand the underlying emotional message through the protagonist's nonverbals and tone of voice. After she finished her psychodrama, we asked her to put some words to what she was experiencing. She said that speaking in German vividly brought back early images, which led to a powerful experience of reliving scenes from her childhood. This helped others who did not understand German to be more tuned into her work, and it also helped her put her emotional work into a cognitive perspective. Questions such as the following are often useful: "What did your father say to you? What were you able to tell him this time that you had not told him before? When did you get stuck as you were talking to him? What emotions did this bring up for you that were familiar? Did you respond to him in different ways today than you did when you were a child?" A few well-timed and appropriate questions can help members sort out their ambivalent feelings and make more sense out of their work.

Consider for a moment another aspect of the scenario just presented. Assume that a member is communicating to her father in her native language and that she gets stuck and does not know what to say. Several possibilities are open here. She can be asked to "make something up," mainly as an attempt to get her unstuck. She can be asked to remain stuck for a time and experience that feeling. Or she can be asked to talk to her father about how this experience now is so typical of what she felt when she was a child. Another direction is to allow other members to get involved and talk about what this psychodrama is bringing up in them. Or other members can eventually offer their interpretations. These hunches and interpretations can then be clarified and confirmed by the member who did the role playing.

If the purpose of the group is to explore intrapersonal and interpersonal problems, the psychodramatic techniques that are aimed at facilitating the expression of feelings are often appropriate for ethnic clients. But if the group has a more didactic, educational, and informational focus, these

techniques are more limited. If members demonstrate that they are highly uncomfortable in even talking about personal issues, let alone displaying their emotions in front of others, psychodrama is not the technique of choice. For those members who have grave cultural injunctions against talking about their family in a group context, role playing that would involve "talking to mother or father" would probably be met with resistance. Before attempting such techniques, the leader would have to fully explore the clients' cultural values and any resistance they might have to directly confronting a family member, even through the symbolic process of the role-playing situation. This demands a high level of training and skill on the leader's part. It is easy to see that an untrained and culturally unaware leader could be counterproductive.

Impact of Moreno on the Development of Group Therapy

In closing, I'd like to recognize the profound impact of J. L. Moreno on the field of group therapy. The more I learn about the techniques that he pioneered, the more aware I become of his genius as a practitioner. It is an understatement to say that he was far ahead of his time. With his visionary perspective he created methods for integrating feelings, fantasies, and actions. In spite of his pioneering spirit, as Blatner and Blatner (1988) write, Moreno's work has not been widely accepted in the United States. He was considered a maverick by the majority of professionals in the psychological world, and his mode of therapy was a radical departure from both the analytic and the nonanalytic schools. He clearly defied the intellectual trends of the period. As a person, he is sometimes described as having been narcissistic and grandiose. The Blatners contend that because of the factors of historical unreadiness and his personal idiosyncrasies, his approach has not received the popular or professional recognition that it deserves.

Moreno's enthusiasm was translated into an active leadership role when he was using psychodramatic methods. Even though his own style was flamboyant, he was also intuitive and warm. His wife, Zerka, has demonstrated that it is possible to use a different type of therapeutic style and still be highly effective. Her style includes more refinement and gentleness than did her husband's.

Moreno chose his own epitaph: "Here lies the man who brought laughter back into psychiatry." He approached his death with dignity, creativity, and control. When he was 85, after having led a full and vigorous life, his body failed him, and he elected to die in his own way. He stopped eating and took only water. He showed that even at the time of his death he was the actor and director of his fate, for he died in his own way, at his own pace (Fine, 1979).

As you read about other group-therapeutic approaches, you will see how many of the basic concepts and techniques of psychodrama appear in what are sometimes referred to as "innovative therapies." As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, many of the experiential therapies borrow heavily from

psychodrama, and even cognitive, behavior-oriented therapies make frequent use of role-playing procedures. Thus, learning about psychodrama is of value because of the many ways in which it can be integrated with the therapies that you will study in the remainder of this book.

If you are interested in learning more about the practical values and applications of psychodrama, do not limit yourself to reading about the approach in journals and books. Instead, consider seeking out some advanced training and supervision and some reputable workshops where you can experience psychodrama as a group member. You will not only learn how this therapy approach works in a group but also be able to work on some personal concerns and find new ways of dealing with them.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. What are some of the most striking differences, in terms of basic concepts and therapeutic techniques, between psychodramatic and psychoanalytic groups? Do you see some ways of thinking in psychoanalytic terms while working with group members in a psychodramatic format?
2. For what populations do you think psychodramatic techniques would be most appropriate? Can you think of any clients whom you would not recommend for psychodrama?
3. What are your reactions to dealing with both the past and the future as though these events were happening in the present? What are some advantages you can see in this present-centered focus? Do you see any problems with bringing all experiences into the "now" and asking clients to reenact a past event or act out some expected future event?
4. How might you respond to a group member who refused to get involved in any type of role playing on the ground that doing so was artificial? If the person were to say to you: "Why do you want me to go back and relive a painful period in my life? I've tried to forget about those difficult times. What good will it do me to open up that can of worms?" how might you respond?
5. What are some specific psychodramatic techniques that you'd like to include in the groups you are leading or might someday lead? How can you incorporate some basic concepts and practices of psychodrama into the model of group counseling that you favor?
6. If you were to employ role-playing procedures in a group you were leading or if you wanted to create a psychodrama as a way to work with a member's problem, what steps would you take to prepare the members for these techniques? What are some ways you can think of to "warm up" your group so that the members are trusting enough to get involved in the process?

7. In the section of this chapter on ethical issues, a number of the risks involved in practicing psychodrama were mentioned. What are your reactions to these cautions and concerns as they apply to you?

8. What training and experience would you deem essential before you felt confident in employing some of the techniques you have read about in this chapter?

9. How might you go about preparing an agency that you were working for to allow you to organize and lead a psychodramatic group? What concerns or objections might you expect to hear from the administrators of such an agency?

10. If you were a member of a psychodramatic group, how do you imagine that you'd respond to getting involved in the techniques that you've just read about? What kind of member would you be?

Where to Go from Here

The *American Society for Group Psychotherapy and Psychodrama* is geared to the needs of professionals who want to learn about the latest developments in the field. It is an interdisciplinary society, in that its members come from all of the helping professions. The goals of the organization are to establish standards for specialists in group therapy and psychodrama and to support the exploration of new areas of endeavors in research, practice, teaching, and training. If you are interested in further information, contact

Stephen F. Wilson, Executive Director
American Society for Group Psychotherapy and Psychodrama
116 East 27th Street
New York, NY 10016

The *American Board of Examiners in Psychodrama, Sociometry and Group Psychotherapy* was established to serve two basic purposes: (1) to establish, on a national level, professional standards in the fields of psychodrama, sociometry, and group psychotherapy, and (2) to certify qualified professionals on the basis of these standards. Two levels of certification have been established by the American Board of Examiners: (1) Practitioner and (2) Trainer, Educator, Practitioner. Applicants must be certified at the first level before becoming eligible for certification at the second. If you are interested in details about certification or if you want a geographic listing of approved trainers, educators, and practitioners in psychodrama, refer to the *Directory of the American Board of Examiners in Psychodrama, Sociometry and Group Psychotherapy* (1987). Contact

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P.O. Box 15572
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RECOMMENDED SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS

If you are seriously interested in psychodrama, I encourage you to read the works of J. L. Moreno and Zerka Moreno. Also, current and back issues of the *Journal of Group Psychotherapy, Psychodrama and Sociometry* are important readings. This journal is published quarterly, and the annual subscription rate is \$40. Write to

Heldref Publications
4000 Albemarle Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20016

Foundations of psychodrama: History, theory, and practice (Blatner & Blatner, 1988) is an updated and excellent resource dealing with the historical, philosophical, psychological, social, and practical foundations of psychodrama. If you have time to read only one source, this would be my recommendation. The Blatners have a readable style, and they have succeeded in giving a fine overview of psychodrama.

Psychodrama: Experience and process (Goldman & Morrison, 1984) is a concise description of the practice of psychodrama. The authors describe specific techniques for the warm-up, action, and sharing phases. Their book also contains a glossary of terms and techniques in the literature of psychodrama.

Acting-in: Practical applications of psychodramatic methods (Blatner, 1973) is a guide for practitioners interested in using psychodramatic techniques in a group setting. This brief book is written very clearly and contains excellent discussions of the basic elements of psychodrama: its methods, stages, principles, and applications as well as some of its pitfalls. Beginners who want a good overview of psychodrama will find this book extremely valuable.

The psychodramatic method (Haskell, 1973) and *Socioanalysis: Self-direction via sociometry and psychodrama* (Haskell, 1975) are two short books that supply beginning group practitioners with a basic grasp of concepts and techniques of psychodrama, sociodrama, and role playing.

Psychodrama for the timid clinician (Leveton, 1977) offers an excellent and eclectic view of psychodrama. The writing is clear, vivid, and very interesting. A number of psychodramatic techniques are described and illustrated through case examples that attest to the author's skills and creativity in applying these techniques. Group leaders can greatly benefit from reading the book and following the author's encouragement to use experiential techniques in group work.

Psychodrama: Rehearsal for living (Starr, 1977) contains good material on role playing and role training, on setting the stage, and on warm-up and training techniques. Particularly good are chapters dealing with applications of psychodramatic methods to marital therapy, children's groups, work with alcoholics and drug abusers, and psychotics and outpatient groups.

Psychodrama: Theory and therapy (Greenberg, 1974) is a reader that covers the theory of psychodrama, its history and development, specialized techniques and treatment, and evaluations of the method. This interesting collection of articles gives the reader a good grasp of the various aspects of psychodrama.

If you are interested in an in-depth study of the history and evolution of psychodrama, as well as its applications to many different problems and populations, I suggest that you consult the annotated bibliography prepared by Samuel Cardone in Corsini's (1966) book *Roleplaying in psychotherapy*. This bibliography is the result of a review of the periodical literature up to 1965; these articles deal with both the theoretical and practical dimensions of psychodrama, and the 133 abstracts attempt to capture the language style of the authors of each of these articles.

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